



Mini Review

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Disputed Freedom: Identity Crisis and Contemporary Actual Slavery

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Abstract

Slavery and human trafficking became are two overlapping phenomena that are conducive to the modern-day actual slavery acts. This precarious situation is first highlighted by a CNN news story on November 14th, 2017 when the news anchor videoed African citizens being actually auctioned to be sold as slaves, though the price is less than one thousand dollars. The article endeavours to expound the crisis of this modern-day slavery and underlining how bad human conditions and identity crisis in Africa are the principal factors that contribute to the rampant phenomenon of contemporary slaver.

Keywords: Slavery; Slave trade; Trafficking; Colonial; Identity

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Over long of decades, abolitionist and anti-slavery activists instigated an international consciousness against the inhumanity of slavery. In response, on February 8th, 1815, 'The Declaration of Powers, on the Abolition of the Slave Trade' was passed to assert in its first sentence that slavery is 'repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality' and that slave trade is 'odious in its continuance' [1]. As a consequence, slave trade ended, and world nations started passing acts for abolishing slavery. These efforts were crowned by the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that included an article stating, 'No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.' [2]. Though servitude in all its forms was abolished, our contemporary era is regressing into this 'odious' practice. There are many forms of contemporary slavery that already 'thrive in every continent and in almost every country' [3]. Vulnerable people are targeted for many forms of servitude, such as forced labour, people trafficking, debt bondage and child marriage as well as exploiting multitudes in low-income, long-hours jobs in private companies. Moreover, servitude includes those categories who are forced to work without being paid when they are victims of violence and intimidation. There are also some others who, in their attempt to escape bad economic conditions by migrating to some other countries, get caught by some other organisations or gangs who make the worst use of them due to the fact that such brackets have no legal documents that

allows them to stay and work legally in the countries they migrate to. Another form of servitude is bonded-labour which means being forced to work for free to attempt to pay back a debt; noting that may become unable to pay off their loans; thus, the debt passes down through generations.

As for women and children, they suffer actual forms of slavery. Women due to bad economic conditions are forced to prostitution either at their home countries or when they are trafficked. On the international level, many women undergo this plight. African women are actually sold to cater for the livelihood of their families. The process of selling humans is consummated when a foreigner visits some poor country, principally, an African country, under the convincing guise of a benefactor who would help the family with money or undertake the task of educating some member of the family. The immoral trick of a benefactor/benefactress is a booming guise in contemporary slave trade. A famous example of this trick is the story of Diana who is chosen by a French benefactress to continue her studies in Paris instead of passing her life a victim of violence, poverty and ignorance in Benin, the capital of the Edo State, in southern Nigeria [4]. Soon after, Diana find herself forced to prostitution by being intimidated by an iron rod and the Juju; i. e. black magic. Diana and many other girls are forced to perform a black magic ceremony. 'The future prostitutes are convinced that they have been put under a spell: they must obey the mama to keep their families safe from harm' [4]. The mama is the benefactress

who has promised to take care of Diana and her education, but she turns out to be a brothel owner who brings young girls from Africa to be forced to prostitution.

Considering children, the business of child-trade is booming in Nigeria and Benin where children are kidnapped or purchased for \$20 – \$70 each by slavers [5] in poorer African states, such as Benin and Togo. It is reported that in wealthier oil-rich states, such as Nigeria and Gabon, children are sold for three hundred and fifty American Dollars each so as to be enslaved in sex dens or to work as unpaid domestic servants [6]. Another well-known type of slavery is trafficking children to serve as human spare parts for the rich. Child slavery also includes young boys in poor African states who are chained and forced to work in farms and sweat-shops. Girls victimhood and slavery embraces the practice of forcing young girls into marriage in their early age or selling them to bidders to be domestic servants, beggars or prostitutes. Besides, there are also many other cases of actual slavery that have been reported. For instances, a French couple paid four thousand and five hundred euros for an African slave girl. 'The girl, who had no official papers, was barred from going to school, worked without being paid and was even punished by being whipped with a belt when her cleaning was judged to be not up to scratch' [7]. At last, the girl could escape, but there are many other unreported cases who cannot escape or die because of many forms of violence enacted against them.

Thus, the CNN news story on November 14th, 2017, accentuates the drastic regression of human conditions and the distorted present-day concept of freedom. It reveals to the world that after centuries of constant attempts to preserve human freedom, people cannot understand the real meaning of freedom because they had social and political conditions robs them of their freedom and turns them into slaves. They are robbed of their identity as human beings because they are not treated as humans.

In the grainy video of the CNN news story, human beings are sold for less than one thousand American dollars and sometimes for four hundred American dollars to work as labour on farms and factories [8]. Though the incident in the CNN video is not the first of its kind, it pinpoints that the aggravating phenomenon of slavery ramifies to the extent that it becomes a drastic reality not just reported individual cases. The story also reveals that the victims of slavery are adults, not children, who are supposedly understand that their freedom and humanity are at stake. It is terrifying to witness that those adults in the video understand that they are sold, but they do not resist as slaves used to do in the past. On the contrary, those adults seem submissive and, in some

instances, they look satisfied. The adults in the video suffer to the extent that they cannot define their identity whether they are free or slaves, humans or animals. Voluntarily, they choose to leave their home lands to be inhumanly trafficked to European shores though they know many stories about the traffickers' abuse. Those adults attempt to escape the regressing socio-political status in their war and conflict torn countries that are run by corrupt political regimes. The CNN news reporter interview a Nigerian young man at the age of twenty-one who fled his home for a year and four months waiting to migrate to Europe to escape the rampant corruption in Nigeria's Edo state. He has been abused and sold for many times. Finally, the traffickers demand ransom payments from his family before eventually releasing him. Nonetheless, this young man confirms, "I'm not happy," he adds. "I go back and start back from square one. It's very painful. Very painful" [8]. Returning to his country is as painful as slavery itself.

Human identity suffers distortion in the African states are torn by war, corruption and terrorism. The terrorist jihadist militant organisation of Boko Haram, i.e. the Islamic State in West Africa or Islamic State's West Africa Province, formerly known as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād, is an active slave master as it publically admits kidnapping women to sell them as slaves. As for the insurgent, murderous al-Shabaab organisation in Somalia, it is not better. Evidently, slavery is booming because of the rampant identity crisis in the poor corrupt African states.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest

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